

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SPACE SCIENCE BOARD

February 6, 1959

Dr. Peter Alexander  
Chester Beatty Research Institute  
Royal Cancer Hospital  
Fulham Road  
London S.W. 3, England

Private

Dear Dr. Alexander:

I am writing in response to your letter of January 23, 1959, to Mr. R. G. Peavay. Unfortunately, Dr. Lederberg will be unable to attend the CETEX meeting in the Hague. However, in working with this Board, he has agreed to hold a meeting on the subject of contamination soon in order to provide the Board with some views which might be available in time for CETEX consideration.

The Space Science Board itself has given some thought to the contamination question. On the one hand it appears possible to take a "hands off" position on the ground that this would give maximum encouragement to space research. This position could have serious consequences. On the other hand, one could take a rigorous position on contamination, risking serious inhibition of space research. It is quite possible that this position would be ignored.

We are beginning to feel that some intermediate position may be desirable--a positive approach stressing what can and should be done in space research. Thus, consideration might be given to placing experiments in such sequence that the effects of early experiments upon later ones would be minimal.

Since the Board's views are still in flux and premature dissemination of these cursory remarks would be undesirable, I have addressed you privately, chiefly in the hope that we might elicit your own views and suggest our desire to cooperate with you and your colleagues.

Sincerely yours,

Hugh Odishaw  
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Joshua Lederberg